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## COMMUNICATIONS

QUOGUE, N. Y., July 25, 1906.

THE EDITOR OF THE

AMERICAN HISTORICAL REVIEW:

Dear Sir:—

IN the issue of the REVIEW for July, in the review of my *War of 1812*, your reviewer, Mr. Gaillard Hunt, has fallen into an inadvertence of statement which I cannot afford to leave uncorrected. He writes:

“The naval victories on Lake Champlain and the military victories at New Orleans are treated as events irrelevant to the objects and outcome of the war.”

As to New Orleans, this is exact as regards the outcome; scarcely so, I think, as regards the objects. As to Lake Champlain, it is entirely contrary to what I explicitly stated. Thus, in concluding my account of Macdonough's victory, Vol. II., p. 381, I say:

“The battle of Lake Champlain, more nearly than any other incident of the War of 1812, merits the epithet decisive.”

This is certainly not saying that the battle was irrelevant to the outcome of the war; and that this was not an accidental comment on my part, but in keeping with my steady point of view, appears both from the preface, which I refrain from quoting, and from the following other extracts:

“As, on a wider field and in more tremendous issues, the fleets of Great Britain saved their country, and determined the fortunes of Europe, so Perry and Macdonough averted from the United States, without further fighting, a rectification of frontier,” etc. (Vol. II., p. 101.)

“In 1814 there stood between the Government and disastrous reverse, and loss of territory, in the north, only the resolution and professional skill of a yet unrecognized seaman on the neglected waters of Lake Champlain.” (Vol. II., p. 267.)

Whatever may be thought of these two estimates, in themselves, they show that I considered this battle far from irrelevant to “the objects, or the outcome, of the War.”

The statement of your reviewer affects too seriously my sanity, as an historical writer, to be passed over in the silence with which an author of many years' experience learns to accept differences of opinion. But for it, I should not have written at all; but, as it has drawn me out, I will say further that, in my judgment, your reviewer has failed in another respect to reach the high standard which should be expected in the REVIEW. The *obiter dicta* of the periodical press are one thing; the REVIEW is specialist in aim and character. Mr. Hunt writes:

"Nor is Captain Mahan without injustice in his treatment of the controversy which terminated in the dismissal of Jackson, the British minister. No minister had ever gone so far in insolence, and no self-respecting government could have done other than dismiss him."

Insolence, doubtless, may be cause for dismissal; the degree that demands it is matter of opinion. Mr. Hunt says Jackson's insolence reached it; an opinion about which I am not solicitous to differ. But in an historical magazine, should it be thought necessary to express an opinion, the opinion should speak to the facts. The fact is that our Government dismissed Jackson, not on a general charge of insolence, but on the specific ground that in his letters to it he had made, and afterwards repeated, a specific implication, which was false and insolent. The American letter ran thus:

"I *abstain*, Sir, from making any particular animadversions on several irrelevant and improper allusions in your letter. . . . But it would be improper to conclude the few observations to which I *purposely limit* myself, without adverting to your repetition of a language implying a knowledge on the part of this Government that the instructions of your predecessor did not authorize the arrangement formed by him."

The abstention, and the limitation, here italicized by me, exclude other grounds for action than the language construed by Madison to imply the meaning which he repelled; and the letter of dismissal rests directly, and solely, upon the same ground: "language reiterating, and even aggravating, the same gross insinuation." After a very diligent examination of the correspondence, I elaborated in the book under review a demonstration that Jackson's language, carefully and fairly scrutinized, did not imply the statement put into his mouth. My conclusion was expressed in these words:

"Prepossession in reading, and proneness to angry misconception, must be inferred in the conduct of the American side of this discussion; for another even graver instance," etc. (p. 226).

This is simply a statement of opinion, with which any one is at liberty to differ; but, as an opinion, it relates not to a general charge of insolence, but to the specific reason alleged by the American Government for its action, which I endeavored to show was unfounded. The opinions advanced by me currently in my account of the transaction, and summarized in the above extract, constitute my injustice in this matter to the administration of Madison; that injustice, if it exists, should have been indicated, not by a general sweeping mention, but by the statement that the facts contained in my demonstration failed to sustain the judgment that "prepossession in reading and proneness to angry misconception must be inferred from the American conduct of the discussion." From first to last the action of the American Government was based on a specific implication, alleged to be in Jackson's letter. If that implication was in the letter, fairly and dispassionately read, I have been unjust; if it was not in the letter, but, as I have asserted, and I think

demonstrated, was read into it, wilfully or carelessly, I have not been unjust. Either view is open to a reviewer's conscientious conviction; but the conviction, when stated, should be in reference to what I have said, and not to what I have not said.

The matter is of consequence because, if I am right, the whole correspondence throws light on Madison's characteristics, confirming impressions which his other diplomatic letters produce; because the examination of the phraseology which I gave I have found nowhere else, and by it the diplomatic incident is essentially transformed; and, finally, because the character of the AMERICAN HISTORICAL REVIEW demands on the part of its reviewers more exactness in stating the position of an author, when they charge him with injustice.

A. T. MAHAN.

IF Captain Mahan had ever seen the instructions which the AMERICAN HISTORICAL REVIEW sends its reviewers he would have known that they are discouraged from sacrificing space to argumentative criticism. He is probably aware that they are always strictly limited to the matter of space. To review Captain Mahan's volumes in a thousand words seemed to me a task which could not under any arrangement of ideas be satisfactorily performed, and I thought it advisable to merely express a dissent to his treatment of the Jackson incident without setting forth the treatment and an argument to show wherein it is unjust, which would have taken all my space. It is the very thing I wanted to do, but I do not believe my readers would have liked it. I believe Captain Mahan to be in error in thinking he has discovered a meaning, or an absence of meaning, in Jackson's most insolent letter to Madison, which no one (not even Madison) ever discovered before; and I hope to show it on an occasion in the near future.

As for the sentence about Lake Champlain and New Orleans it is obviously too sweeping, being a mistake which I was carelessly led into by the following passage of Captain Mahan's:

"For these reasons, whatever transactions took place in this quarter [Lake Champlain] up to the summer of 1814 were in characteristic simply episodes; an epithet which applies accurately to the more formidable, but brief, operations here in 1814, as also to those in Louisiana. Whatever intention underlay either attempt, they were in matter of fact almost without any relations of antecedent or consequent. They stood by themselves, and not only may, but should, be so considered. Prior to them, contemporary reference to Lake Champlain, or to Louisiana, is both rare and casual. For this reason, mention of earlier occurrences in either of these quarters has heretofore been deferred, as irrelevant and intrusive if introduced among other events, with which they coincided in time, but had no further connection." (Vol. II., p. 357.)

GAILLARD HUNT.